

Plan Components Workshop - Public Meeting Comments
George Washington National Forest Plan Revision
Lexington, VA January 29, 2009
Small Group Sessions

Wilderness Group 1

- Friends of Shenandoah are researching the mineral rights in Little River. They proposed that the exterior portions of Little River be a National Scenic Area.
- Reddish Knob is scenic, thus the exterior portions of Little River are worthy of National Scenic Area designation.
- You can treat for gypsy moth in wildernesses. Deer management is needed in areas defoliated by gypsy moth.
- When the Wilderness Act was written, Congress was looking at 5000-acre areas.
- Wildlife management can be provided for in the legislation for a National Scenic Area, as was done for Mount Pleasant.
- I am against designating Little River as wilderness. The counties are opposed to it.
- We already have large wilderness areas in the Shenandoah National Park.
- VDGIF is opposed to bringing the Ramseys Draft Addition down to the road (along FSRs 95 & 96) and reducing suitable acres.
- For Ramseys Draft, moving wilderness off the Shenandoah Mountain Trail to allow mountain biking, while adding land to the east, would be a good trade-off.
- Only one stand-alone wilderness is proposed. Why? Oliver Mountain is an example of an area that should be added. It has no management now and has significant old growth. Through collaboration, agreement was reached to adjust the boundary for bike trails.
- There are 370,000 acres of potential wilderness, but only 24,000 acres are recommended. This is less than the Jefferson National Forest, and less than most of the eastern forests.
- The Roadless Rule is out, and backcountry is not the same as wilderness.
- Allowing timber harvest within one-half mile of the boundary modifies backcountry.
- Twenty-nine percent of the Forest is already in a protected designation.
- I want more wilderness to provide protected areas for ecological value.
- We went through a collaborative process, but only two areas from the process were accepted, totaling only 17,000 acres. The Forest Service asked us to collaborate and then proposed so little wilderness? Why did we spend our time collaborating if the FS was not going to support the majority of our collaborative proposals?
- Skidmore should be recommended for wilderness. It is remote. Wilderness designation would help prevent wind development, which is a threat.

Wilderness Group 2

- Move Ramseys Draft Addition back from the trail in the south corner. This trail receives much use from mountain bikers. Also, move the wilderness boundary back from Shenandoah Mountain Trail.
- Why did the Forest Service not consider primitive recreation areas? Such areas are possible on the George Washington National Forest.
- I like the idea of adding to the Rich Hole Wilderness to put that wilderness in close proximity to the Rough Mountain Wilderness.
- Allowing management within one-half mile of roads allows easy access for wildlife management. I'm concerned about excluding this management in the Rich Hole Addition.
- I can't understand putting potential wilderness areas back in management. It is a mistake to do it.
- I'm disappointed in the recommendation, which would result in only 6% of the Forest being in wilderness. This is not enough.
- None of the eastern Forests are appropriate for wilderness.
- The point is not what percent of the Forest is wilderness. You need to look at where uses are appropriate. There is not enough wilderness. Some wilderness is needed on the Lee. The bigger the wilderness, the better. Cutting pieces out reduces the value of an area. Other areas of the Forest provide opportunities for other uses.
- Skidmore should be proposed.
- In Laurel Fork, some management may be needed for the special species.
- Make wilderness bigger. This allows for self-organized ecological systems.
- Beech Lick should be managed as a roadless area. It is roadless. Beech lick Knob should have been included in the 1993 Roadless inventory.
- I'm disappointed that Three Sisters was not included. When you hike up the coves, you have quality isolation.
- I like the concept of having a quality wilderness area surrounded by managed timber land and not subdivisions.
- Beech Lick should remain in management to deal with any future catastrophic event.
- This may be the last opportunity to protect these areas.

Written Comments – Wilderness

- Agree with Augusta County on no more wilderness. There is enough already with the Blue Ridge Parkway, etc. Worried about fire, houses being close.
- Listen to more mainstream interest groups and Augusta County Board of Supervisors and others who do not want more wilderness designated
- Little River is an area used by a variety of interests and the area is already protected and will not be timbered because of the poor soils, etc.
- Wilderness designation adds more bureaucracy and eliminates any potential to manage an area as conditions change.

- Wilderness is for a limited few at the cost of all residents and Americans. Once you put the wilderness designation on an area, you increase use and eventually the area is degraded.
- USFS ownership already protects the forest lands from much of what the public seeks through wilderness designation.
- Padds Creek Road along Rich Hole wilderness boundary should be available for forest manipulation for wildlife improvement/timber harvest.
- Ramseys Draft proposed wilderness is within ½ mile of roads, includes past clearcuts, habitat management areas. Mineral rights are included as well.
- Ramseys Draft addition appears that it could seriously encroach on trails ridden by mountain bikers for more than a decade. Boundary should be modified to allow access along the section of the Shenandoah Mtn Trail, which would be a huge benefit to the Great Eastern Trail.
- Would like to see the western side of Ramseys Draft become a wilderness study area. The boundary of the area should be 50 feet off of the western side of Trail 447, Shen Mtn Trail. The boundary of the current Ramseys Draft Wilderness should be amended, the new boundary should be 50 feet to the east of the center of Trail 447, and the current boundary is on the county line. This will provide for one of the best sections of the Great Eastern Trail. It will allow access by bicycles and it will permit the trail to be maintained by mechanized equipment.
- Crawford Knob has mountain bike use with mtn bikers maintaining trail. If there is an unsustainable section of trail on the south side of Crawford (trail is in the firebreak), the mtn bike clubs would like to help re-route the section.
- Elliot Knob has regular mtn bike use with both east and west access and can be ridden as a loop with Crawford Knob for an epic ride – a true backcountry mountain bike experience.
- Wilderness gives you nothing; it just sits there and costs you money. I love cutting wood and using the forest.
- I agree with the proposal the Friends of Shen Mtn has come up with. As a mountain biker, we've worked with many user groups to develop a plan and I'd like to stick to it. You asked for collaboration and we gave it to you. Please do not add to the proposed wilderness areas by Reddish Knob as suggested. Please keep as many mtn bike trails open as possible. Please only slightly change the boundary in Ramseys Draft to allow bike access.
- Potential wilderness areas are roadless areas – and they must be managed as such, if they are not actually recommended to become wilderness.
- Exclude Grooms Ridge from the Little River area.
- Keep wilderness away from Rt 250. Mtn bikes love the Breastworks Trail at Braley's. Don't expand south or west.
- Re-align the west side of Ramseys Draft to allow bikes.
- Primitive recreation comments are a land grab attempt by pro-wilderness. They can hike anywhere in the GW. They don't need a special place set aside just to hike.
- Existing backcountry management is just fine and works.
- Need to maintain existing wildlife management areas.
- Closing our forests and limiting access is going to cost many jobs.

- Many areas are hurt by gypsy moths and need to be managed properly to provide new growth which will create beneficial habitat for wildlife. These areas can be managed better to allow removal of these damaged trees. The forests are a huge asset and any proposed wilderness designation is not good for the forests.
- Mtn bikes have spent a lot of time building and maintaining trails and therefore should not have access taken away.
- The limited new wilderness areas are okay but please don't write off Scenic Areas as an alternative to wilderness. You don't have to make a new wilderness; you could do scenic instead and have similar protection while allowing continued access to trails by mtn bikes.
- I like the decision not to recommend more areas for wilderness.
- Do not recommend Crawford/Whetstone for wilderness.
- Make sure edges of multiuse trails are well beyond wilderness. No Ramsey-like issues going in and out of wilderness.
- Rockingham and Augusta Counties and those to their north already have extensive wilderness areas in the Shenandoah National Park. Additional wilderness designation should be very limited since the geographic area as a whole already contains a large wilderness area. Future land decisions should be considered taking the whole geographic region of the GW and the Shen National Park together into account.
- Support the areas proposed by the Forest Service, plus Laurel Fork, Skidmore Fork (Rockingham County) Kelley Mtn and Big Schloss.
- Include Three Sisters west of the Appalachian Trail and east of 501 – very remote feeling in deep ravines, very isolated, remote and rugged.
- None of the draft documents address primitive recreation – this is a critical part of the ROS which is omitted. Even though this is usually associated with wilderness, there could be desired conditions for the forest for areas where primitive recreation is available. Given the relatively small size of existing wilderness and proposed wilderness, the only area which comes close to approximating primitive recreation is the entire Little River Roadless area. In order to experience this area as primitive recreation, the entire Little River roadless area should be included in wilderness and all trails within would be closed to mountain bikes. You should also make proposals here or elsewhere where road closures or trail restrictions could approximate the definition of primitive recreation as the RPA and Forest Service Handbook define it.
- No where have you addressed the need for wilderness as you have been directed by USDA/USFS. There is a need for wilderness on the Lee District!
- Reddish Knob clearly warrants National Scenic Area recommendation.
- Against expanding wilderness. Backcountry recreation keeps options open for everyone and allows no one to act on behalf of the forest, with a wilderness designation.
- Beech Lick Knob should be wilderness and Big Schloss should be considered as a National Scenic Area – the PATC people want to protect the Big Schloss area.
- We don't need any more wilderness at all. The roads and trails at Little River are used for hunting and fishing access. Why should the people that pay for a national forest stamp be blocked off by people taking the trails and roads away?

- You have to drive through Dry River to get in Dry Run so if Dry Run is closed off, will there be a bridge or will you just close it?
- No more designated wilderness. It makes it difficult to manage for the Forest Service and it locks up the land from other users forever. The existing proposals for wilderness are acceptable, assuming these are not areas already being used by other groups.
- Urge you to increase wilderness as much as you can as the human population grows, our lands need good stewardship more than ever.
- Would like to see Three High Heads, Beech Lick Knob, Skidmore Fork, Little River, Ramseys Draft Addition and Laurel Fork as wilderness.
- Like to see Big Schloss, Massanutten Mtn, Shenandoah Mtn and Kelley Mtn designated as a National Scenic Area.

Vegetation Management, Suitable Acres, Early Seral Habitat, Economics

Group 1

- 1) Concerned that the actual amount of acres suitable for timber production that are operable will be so few that there will not be enough left to manage habitat effectively.
- 2) FS needs to find ways to become more efficient with vegetation management to enable more harvesting under existing budgets. Would benefit both local economy and wildlife. Increased use of stewardship contracting was discussed as a way to achieve this. (Recorders note – I tried several times to steer this toward a plan component with little success. The only way I can fit this into Plan Revision is as a desire for a larger timber harvest objective – although that was not explicitly stated.)
- 3) Concern regarding the large imbalance of age classes and skewing of age class distribution toward older age classes. Current management will not balance age classes. The amount of acres suitable for timber production and budget limits FS ability to balance age classes. Not enough change in the Plan Revision to counter this trend - we'll never catch up. This results in increased risk for catastrophic insect infestations and fires.
 - a. Losing mgmt. areas (the 14, 15, 16, 17) could help us by removing some limitations on amounts of early seral habitat in some current management areas.
 - b. We need more ESH of all types.
 - c. Need to meet the 1993 ASQ.
- 4) The Potential Wilderness Areas will complicate or limit future management in these areas (Recorders note - viewed as negative thing given the person who provided the comment.)
- 5) How much overlap of the use of fire and timber is envisioned in the plan revision? Curious about too much habitat alteration with fire and timber combined. Don't burn up good suitable timber.

- 6) Concern that we have an objective to decommission roads, but no objective for new road construction. Suggest a “no net gain” in roads. Reduced access equates to reduced management.
- 7) When/if we provide access to “new” areas (e.g. get ROW’s or build roads into previously unmanaged areas) those areas are not conducive to good wildlife habitat. We need to also create the habitat to increase hunting opportunities.

Group 2

- 1) Concern that there is little or no economic analysis or economic effects considered in the plan revision. There are economic effects to any change in management. What is the economic effect of increased wilderness?
- 2) OHV’s increase economic benefit to the local community. GW currently provides “relaxing, easy” 4 wheel opportunities on existing FS roads. Want to keep existing roads open. 4 Wheel drive community also provides help and organized labor.

Written Comments –Vegetation Mgmt

- Keep annual timber harvest at 1993 levels, need early successional habitat
- Really not happy about the age of the forest in many areas – mainly because they are static, non-producing forests in the way of food, browse, mast and cover.
- These huge stands of chestnut oak are barely useful when they are producing – at least early successional would provide browse and cover for nesting/bedding. Example areas around Rich Hole wilderness and James River Face wilderness
- You do not mention how to minimize invasive species intrusion and how to prevent their establishment and limit their expansion. Vegetative management (harvesting and prescribed fire) encourages the spread of invasives.
- Controlled burns are a waste of time and money. Mines Run which is close to Little River was burned around 8-10 years ago and the only thing that grows in there is locust trees and greenbriers so thick that you can’t get through. Sunlight never touches the ground.
- Set standards for numbers of acres of forest types that need to exist to support wildlife species. If those numbers are not sufficient, taken cumulatively across the region, the Forest Service should take responsibility for protecting this forest type on its land, even if it is a large proportion of the forest.
- How is the plan going to address the growing proliferation of invasive species in timber harvest and prescribed burn areas with regards to monitoring, inventory and control? Introducing species such as ailanthus in these areas that suppress and/or displace native species is counter productive to timber and wildlife management to include early successional habitat.

Old Growth

- 1) Will unsuitable lands fulfill old growth needs?
- 2) Where the old growth network as is outlined in R8 OG Guidance document?
- 3) Where is true old growth? (defined as areas that have not been disturbed via timbering)

- 4) Difference in true old growth and late successional forest that simply meets age requirement.
- 5) Don't allow timber harvest in any existing old growth.
- 6) Don't provide for old growth on suitable acres.
- 7) In any OG stand FS still needs to manage & treat disease, insects, etc.

Requests:

- 1) Check link to map of OG in on-line CER.
- 2) Provide/have available GIS maps on current OG network and future OG network & compare w/ suitability.

Written Comments about Old Growth

- Designation is age based only, no other data and not ground-truthed
- Don't allow harvest in old growth
- Show old growth by suitable and unsuitable.
- There needs to be a forest-wide old growth inventory – not merely inventories at the project area.
- Very chagrined that you would consider harvesting old growth forests. Old forests are a very rare forest type and deserve protection for the biological and social values they offer.
- While the Forest may have an excess of a certain old growth forest type, it may be the only example of this type in the area. You should demonstrate that the forest type is protected enough outside of the forest.

Special Biological Areas

All DCR heritage sites that were recommended should be added as SBA's. Especially good turtle area at Paddy Run.

Headwaters SBA – large enough

Peters Mill Run showy lady's slipper

Written Comments about Special Biological Areas

- Wood turtle habitat deserves a special biological area designation as Dept of Natural heritage and Wild Virginia have requested

Water Quality

- Need a broader view than just riparian areas; need watershed view
- Need better picture of watershed management for water quality
- Need to identify water intakes more than reservoirs
- How should drinking water watersheds be managed?
 - More attention in local drinking water watersheds
 - Identify them
 - Hope communities have ideas
 - riparian protection

- look at road and trail densities
 - look at other land disturbance (cell towers, basal area)
- New York City and Asheville watershed management plans are good
- Timber harvest is not a problem for water quality, it is the roads that are a problem
- Presence of so many impaired waters on NF
 - can help target restoration
 - need to stay farther away from impaired streams
 - need to rethink how we manage these areas
- Can we use timber sales to help restoration of areas? KV funds
- Sedimentation is a problem associated with harvesting – need more direct measure of sedimentation
- Economic issue of reservoirs filling with sediment
- What are FS plans to mitigate loss of hemlock
- May need to look at more active management in riparian areas to deal with effects of hemlock (overstory removal and planting)
- FS has done a good job of protecting water quality
- Consider identifying a special emphasis for Little Mare Mtn for the cooperative fire mgt with The Nature Conservancy

Written Comments about Water

- As a landowner downstream of Lexington Reservoir, would like reservoir land, which is contiguous to GW and Jefferson National Forests to remain public and become part of National Forest.

Wind Energy and Climate Change

- Great Eastern Trail should get same consideration as AT in regard to wind energy development
- Concern about viewshed for primitive backcountry areas and wind towers
- Fragmentation of the habitats most sensitive to climate change due to wind tower development
- Industrial wind development is incompatible use for rest of desired conditions and goals of proposed plan
- Climate change – if drier times are ahead, water issues will be all the more important
- Would like to see a map of areas currently proposed as unsuitable for wind development
- How will the Plan address the following components of climate change: carbon sequestration, resiliency to impacts of climate change
- Climate change can affect forest plan – need to have flexibility – concerned about designations like wilderness impeding our ability to respond to climate change

Written Comments about Wind Energy and Climate Change

- Wind energy should be considered.

- You have failed to analyze what effects climate change are likely to have on the desired conditions, on threatened and endangered species, management indicator species, and forest communities.
- Harvest and prescribed fire increase the dryness of the areas and the effects will likely be exacerbated with climate change.
- Closed canopy forests are most resilient to effects of climate change and protecting against invasive species.
- Ban all areas for wind turbines. The sites will destroy too much land for so little return. Future areas of development of wind turbines need to be in only wind intensive areas – which are only in the coastal and bay regions of Virginia.
- Agree with the way you have addressed wind energy so far. It is too early in the renewable energy discussion to block any future possibilities.
- Give windmills a chance.
- Shenandoah Mtn, North Mtn, Church Mtn and other ridgelines should be unsuitable for wind development.
- The Great Eastern Trail corridor and viewshed should be protected from development, including wind.

Trails and Roads

- When you decommission a road, can it be a trail?
- Problems with maintaining what we have
- Connections to make loops
- Revenue in ATV areas is not enough to maintain the area
- Peavine is a war zone
- Willing to police themselves
- Concentrated use accelerates damage – Roads closed
- User fees for ATV areas
- Grants for ATV trail work, new and existing. 20% of \$1 million. State of VA
- Users want to improve areas
- Loading ramps used as jumps
- Traffic control structures used as obstacles to users increase interest
- Spread use out to lessen used trails. With help from user groups to spread word
- Sell tickets for ATV area at local stores. Good for all.
- OHV – More high clearance roads
- Do not improve OHV trails
- Not sure what roads are designated OHV. Need a map
- Adopt a FS road possibility
- User fees for vehicles to raise money for trails and OHV roads
- How many miles of designated OHV is seasonal - % of total miles available

Request –

Show which roads are OHV on a map and a list on the website

Written Comments – Trails and Roads

- Close spur roads on North River District but allow the creation of new roads as connectors to existing trails
- Create loops, take existing trails and expand them to add new sections to move users away from sensitive areas to stronger areas
- Support the extension of existing OHV trails at minimum retain existing roads and trails
- Need the OHV roads on map and website
- Please, please open 33 Second Mtn entrance.
- Open Rocky run ATV entrance (or make it the OHV entrance) to help ATV not have to drive up a 5 mile road to unload. This would help with the 33 entrance problems.
- Offer more high clearance roads
- Use Adopt a Trail program to maintain trails.
- Emphasize loop trails.
- The National Forest contains areas of private land within its boundaries. The rights of those landowners should be protected; especially regarding access and forest mgmt to suppress fire. Any economical harm to private landowners should not be acceptable.
- Existing rules, regulations and direction include information on road density and road density guidelines and standards – they are valuable.
- As a member of the Va 4WD Association, the United 4WD and Rover Owners Association of Va, I can say that we are willing to continue to assist the North River District and doing maintenance of these areas that are important to us. We are willing to assist you in developing a working model of sustainable trails that are well maintained.
- There would be better use of existing OHV trails if several groups can volunteer their time, resources and dollars to help the Forest Service achieve their goals of closing illegal activity while maintaining legal trails.
- From the damage I have seen first hand on trails from horses, they should be prohibited from wilderness areas (mud holes, pruning)

Written Comments – General

- Overall, the highlights look reasonable.
- The National Forest is designated as “the land of many uses.” The plan should continue the similar uses in place in the region today. Any further restriction of use strays from the forest’s intended purpose.
- Excellent format for the Woodstock mtg.
- Impressed by the balance of your plan.
- Computer screen maps would be a bit more user-friendly if a few towns were shown.
- Like the idea of the area being managed if something happens on the forest (flexibility).
- The large group format is better!
- Any plan that allows the greatest number of groups to gain some of what they want without damaging the forest is the best.

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Woodstock, VA February 5, 2009
Large Group Question and Answer

- The transmission lines and access roads needed for wind energy will cause additional disruptions and need to also be considered in any evaluation of effects.
- Wind energy will require 50-foot roads and 118 wind towers, requiring 5 acres per tower. Why destroy North Mountain, when, one ridge over, there is a ridge with a road along the top that is private land? Private landowners could make money.
- Expand the list of areas unsuitable for wind energy; e.g., inventoried roadless areas and areas with significant trails on ridge tops.
- Will an EIS for wind energy include both “tiers” of analysis – one for feasibility and one for effects? For I-81, there was a feasibility study but didn’t do an effects analysis. *Applications for certain projects, such as wind energy first have to show that the project would meet certain requirements and then undergo a site-specific environmental analysis that is open to public involvement and input.*
- Wind turbines require bases that are eight stories deep and require five acres. They use a huge amount of concrete under the turbines. They are not suitable anywhere on the National Forest.
- Would the Forest Service use state or federal standards for wind development? Virginia is working on standards that are less stringent than federal. *We would use Federal standards since we are a federal agency.*
- More than 50% of ridge tops are privately owned, so there is no need for wind energy on National Forest. One third of ridges with Class 3 winds are privately owned. The cumulative impacts from wind energy on both private land and federal land should be analyzed. Development on NF land would undercut the ability of private landowners to profit from wind development. *Applications for wind development must demonstrate the project cannot be done on private lands first. The cumulative effects analysis would include surrounding private lands.*
- Good to see identification and mapping of drinking water watersheds. Twenty localities and groups have passed a resolution on drinking water. In the future there will be more need for clean water. There are areas on the Forest where drinking water comes directly from the Forest. Treating water for drinking is expensive (example of Luray). Manage the water so there will not be a need for treatment.

- The area west of Broadway was made a primitive area. You stopped maintaining cleared areas (wildlife clearings). The wildlife have now moved down to private land. Fix the lack of deer on National Forest. Bring wildlife back. *The Forest Service and Va Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries can no longer maintain all wildlife clearings so have to prioritize.*
- There was a recent article in the paper that made it sound like there are two areas in Shenandoah County being seriously considered for wilderness that are not the four areas we are talking about tonight. *The article is misleading, the two areas are on the potential wilderness area inventory and so they have been evaluated/considered, but at this time are not being intently considered for wilderness.*
- Is there a way to participate in the wilderness process? Will areas be managed in a way that will decrease wilderness value or increase it? (Big Schloss was mentioned.) How can the public follow the evaluation process? *There is evaluation information on our website and that is one of the areas that the forest plan will eventually determine – how these areas will be managed. And we are taking any comments you may have.*
- What about wind energy would lead the Forest Service to embrace the idea of even considering wind energy on National Forest? *This is a new issue with no history of management on National Forest lands. There is a national focus on alternative forms of energy so we just can't categorically say no.*
- If we allow the wind turbines, we will first pay the Germans for making the turbines, and then the electricity will feed into the urban areas, not the local energy needs. We need more personal types of wind mills on private land that will contribute to the local energy grid.
- The presence of many impaired waters on National Forest should be taken into account in Forest Service activities. For example, road decommissioning, aquatic habitat improvement and more proactive management should take place in these watersheds.
- If an area is made a wilderness or a scenic area, what is the effect on private property, especially road access; e.g., shutting down the road to my future wind mill? Private landowners need access to their land. *Private landowner access is a priority, even in a wilderness. There are private roads for those situations in wilderness.*
- We need to understand that the National Forests were established to manage for the renewable resource of timber. *And water was another primary reason.*
- Do you have the same process for oil and gas leasing as for wind energy permits? *No, oil and gas leasing is done through subsurface mineral rights that are*

retained during land acquisition or through the bidding process through BLM. A wind energy permit would need to show that it's needed, cannot be accommodated on private land.

- Where are the 244 miles of OHV roads? OHV riders cannot find them. *We will provide a list and map.*
- What are the public involvement opportunities for the plan? *We will have a 90-day comment period after the Draft Plan is released (late April/early May). The Final Plan should be released at the end of the year. At that time, you can submit an objection that is considered by the Regional Forester. The objection can result in some modification to the Final Plan. We welcome public comments at any time from now through the 90-day comment period on the Draft Plan – the sooner the better.*
- Is your objective to always add to wilderness areas? *No, but the identification and evaluation of potential wilderness areas (including need) is a requirement for every revision of the Forest Plan. We may end up recommending more, or less, than the four areas we are talking about tonight in the final plan.*
- I'm disappointed that you did not recommend more wilderness, especially Beech Lick. This is an ideal wilderness. The Great Eastern Trail goes through it. Making Beech Lick wilderness would protect ecological values, the view shed, and the trail corridor. It would also provide protection against wind energy (Rockingham County has approved a meteorological tower on private land). Also, Big Schloss should be designated a scenic area. *We believe that a national scenic area should be recommended where there are exceptional, rare scenic values. The evaluation of all of the potential wilderness areas will be put on the website soon.*
- Add the wind index to your maps. There should be a high standard when considering wind power. Wind power is only being pursued because of incentives provided by Congress. *We do have a wind class map on our website.*
- Also include the Great Eastern Trail view shed as an area not suitable for wind energy. Why doesn't the Great Eastern Trail get the same status as the Appalachian Trail? *The AT is designated as a National Scenic Trail. And the GET is not completely identified/constructed yet.*
- Use volunteer groups, Americorps, etc. for trail maintenance. Can we use signage at ATV areas for proper disposal of trash and oil, etc? It ends up downstream. *The ATV areas should have signs already. We do many volunteer groups for trail maintenance that we greatly appreciate. Last year we estimated 179,000 hours of total volunteer efforts at a value of \$3.4 million.*

- Invasive species are identified as one of the four major threats to National Forests. Address the fact that invasive species are found in areas of disturbance. How will you prevent invasive species, while also opening up areas? *We are still working on direction for non-native invasive species management and prevention.*
- If you decrease access, you will intensify the effects on areas that still have access.
- The Plan needs to take into account the Shenandoah National Park. This area is protected. Eighty thousand acres are in wilderness. Need to look at a regional perspective as well.
- You have the right balance now in meeting user demands. Renewable energy needs must be addressed, can't shut the door on wind energy yet.
- Flaggpole Road is not being maintained. Water runs down the road. *Flagpole Road is not a priority road for maintenance and maintenance funds are limited. However if we want to close or decommission roads that are open now, there will likely be a lot of opposition.*
- I'm concerned with wilderness. When you make an area wilderness, you hand over control to people who do not live here. Like being able to come back in 10-15 years and say that it was a bad idea...can't do that when people who don't live here go into closed rooms and push through a wilderness. Like a process that allows local people to have a voice and reevaluate every 15 years.
- I want the Forest Service to develop a new trail: Bald Ridge Trail (?), which goes to a waterfall. *This is currently a non-system trail that we are not interested in making a designated trail because it is in a very dangerous location at the waterfall.*
- All people using the National Forest should pay a fee, like hunters do, to help maintain roads, etc. *We can't charge for access to the National Forest, unless it is in a special designated area. The hunting and fishing stamp is collected by the state game agency and goes back to wildlife habitat improvements on the forest.*
- Laurel Fork should be made wilderness, the area has been discussed for wilderness in the 1970's but it wasn't made wilderness. Then BLM turned around and offered it for oil and gas leasing but the Nature Conservancy was able to purchase the lease. We need to put Laurel Fork in a status where it can't be touched.
- I'm opposed to Laurel Fork as wilderness. The only thing that makes it unique is a state line. There are many acres of similar ecosystem in West Virginia on the other side of the line. The people of Highland County have voted a number of times that they don't want it wilderness.

- The National Forests were established to manage water. This is critical. You should bring together everything related to water management and put it in one chapter in the Plan. *Water is a priority and we will have desired conditions and guidelines related to watersheds and riparian areas.*
- Wind energy will tax the water system.
- The OHV community is willing to pay a user fee. *We are not able to charge for access unless it is for specialized areas, such as for ATVs.*
- Do we know the impacts of different activities on water – research watersheds at Coweeta and Fernow? On groundwater and karst areas? *We will be adding information to the plan on groundwater and karst and guidelines on soil compaction and soil acidification on certain soils.*
- More areas should be added to wilderness, specifically Little Alleghany, Oliver Mountain, and Duncan Knob.
- Expand wilderness. It is now 4% of the Forest, and with the proposal it would be 6%. It should be more. The recommended wilderness areas do not close the Forest off. No roads would be closed. The Southern Appalachians are the most important ecological area in the world. We need to protect some for future generations.
- Why the big increase in prescribed fire? Let local people know when there is a prescribed fire.
- Wilderness areas keep groups out that want to manage the habitat for wildlife.
- Wilderness designation does keep people out - hunters don't hunt in wilderness because there's no habitat (cover, berries, etc.). There's no habitat management in wilderness.
- One missing piece is education, for the long-term viability of the forest's resources. We need to teach people how to enjoy the National Forest and how to be responsible in the Forest.
- Consider the landscape effects from natural fire, natural disturbances, insects and disease impacts.
- I'm concerned about the Little River area. It will limit access, so that only the physically elite can go there. Older people will be kept out. Mountain bikers and bear hunters will be kept out.

- We need to keep early successional forest. There's not enough timber harvest and the lopsided age class distribution will be an even greater problem 15 years from now.
- The George Washington National Forest is the largest publicly owned oak hickory system in the world. You're destroying that ecosystem. Other species (maple, yellow poplar, etc.) are taking its place because you are not cutting enough. You're not cutting enough timber, and you're making old growth – 90% of the Forest will be in old growth in 100 years. Clearcutting produces oak hickory species. There's little wildlife in gypsy moth kill areas.